



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 10, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Doyle
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Latta
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member Walden and Ranking Member Latta:

As members of the Equality Caucus who fight for improved access to such important services as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ("NSPL"), we write to express our support for a mark-up of H.R. 4194, the *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2019* to formally establish the 9-8-8 code for use by the NSPL. The establishment of this three-digit code for the NSPL will greatly improve access to this life-saving service for all Americans. We also urge you to add provisions to address the specific needs of the LGBTQ community.

As you know, suicide is an especially critical issue for the LGBTQ community, particularly amongst LGBTQ youth. LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide as their peers and more than one in three transgender youth and one in five LGBTQ youth reported attempting suicide this past year. These statistics are deeply concerning. We believe that the establishment of a three-digit code for the NSPL will save lives in the LGBT community, but we believe more needs to be done.

Given the needs of the LGBT community, we urge you to add the provision of specialized services for LGBTQ people in H.R. 4194. This should include counselor training in LGBTQ cultural competency and the establishment of an Interactive Voice Response ("IVR") to specialty partners for acute at risk-populations, including LGBTQ youth.

The FCC also recognizes the need for specialized services for LGBT people. Both within the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC") *Report on the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018* and its announcement of the Report's release on August 15, 2019, Chairman Pai and the Wireline Competition Bureau recognized the need for the strong

consideration of specialized services for LGBTQ youth in making further changes to NSPL's structure.

Specifically, upon release of the Report, Chairman Pai acknowledged the extent to which LGBTQ youth are suffering, stating, "There is a suicide epidemic in this country, and it is disproportionately affecting at-risk populations, including our Veterans and LGBTQ youth." The press release goes on to acknowledge how increased access to well-equipped call centers can save lives.

Chairman Pai's statement was informed by the Report which, on multiple occasions, cited comments and other recommendations from LGBTQ groups and experts regarding specialized services. Most significantly, the Report referenced a letter from Senators Baldwin (D-WI) and Sullivan (R-AK) that urged the FCC to include a recommendation for specialized services. The letter called for specialized services for LGBTQ youth and veterans to be considered by "(1) SAMHSA, the VA, and Congress when considering any improvements to the Lifeline; and (2) the Commission as it considers designating a 3-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system."

Separate from the designation process, the House of Representatives has weighed in on this issue as well. The House Appropriations Committee included language in the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services report directing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ("SAMHSA"), the administrator of the NSPL, to consider the implementation specialized services for LGBTQ youth including training and the establishment of an IVR.

It is our hope that, as Congress works to quickly designate the 9-8-8 code, we also include training in LGBTQ cultural competency and the establishment of an IVR to specialty partners for acute at-risk populations, including LGBTQ youth. We thank you for your tremendous work thus far on combatting the suicide epidemic, and look forward to working with you to continue to help save lives.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress




Katie Hill
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Sharice Davids
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Chris Stewart; the Honorable Seth Moulton; the Honorable Greg Gianforte;
the Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson